



Achieving Real Cost Savings Through Sustainable Enterprise Innovation at Windsor Foods

THE COMPANY: A world-leading manufacturer and marketer of frozen ethnic foods and appetizers.

THE GOAL: Create a culture of innovation that taps into the best ideas of employees, suppliers and customers, while providing a system that tracks innovation activities from discovery through implementation.

THE RESULTS: Cost savings of \$500,000+ and new product concepts estimated at \$2MM+ over 18 months while engaging customers and suppliers in the innovation conversation.

Uniting a geographically diverse workforce is a challenge on its own, but it becomes even more unwieldy as an organization launches new initiatives that impact each employee. With 27 production lines in nine manufacturing plants across six states, U.S.-based Windsor Foods manages to unite its diverse, often siloed cultures with an online collaboration platform that empowers employees, suppliers and customers to directly impact the company's success.

Engaging for innovation

In 2010 Windsor Foods began using Imaginatik's Innovation Central platform to enable its employees to collaborate throughout the continental U.S. With a new innovation strategy the company sought to unite its diverse plants under a single banner of innovation. In 18 months it was able to improve business processes and tie metrics to them, innovate its products and use its customers to help identify product or process improvements.

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Today Windsor Foods is actively engaged in long-term sustainable innovation by engaging internal and external customers toward driving innovative solutions, utilizing Innovation Central to manage the activity. Events have generated more than \$500,000 in annual cost savings.

Reaching outside the organization

A key initiative for Windsor Foods' innovation program reveals new opportunities in product development and cost savings from an unlikely source: its suppliers.

The company presented its innovation strategy to grocery store chains, restaurants and foodservice distributors, then offered access to its innovation portal. In addition to the portal, it partnered with its customers on a new innovative product concept that resulted in \$2MM in sales.

By reaching outside its walls for new perspectives, Windsor Foods has elevated its relationships past supplier to partner. The company brings value to the relationship through collaboration and driving win/win results for both parties. Results have included cost savings, production efficiencies, reduction in labor and safety improvements.

Measuring results

In just one example of the benefits realized from innovation at Windsor Foods, a change in process was able to save the company more than \$30,000 each year.

BUILD VS. BUY

When Windsor Foods first set out to create an innovation program to bring 3,000 employees into a virtual central location, it considered building an online platform in-house. After considering several options it chose Imaginatik for its Challenge-based approach and methodology.

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In Lampasas, Texas, Windsor Foods produces Mexican appetizers such as mini burritos and tacos. The team at this plant struggled to improve the efficiency of a process called “first-hour start-up” – literally starting the plant up in the morning.

Using Innovation Central, a Challenge was launched – employees entered ideas and collaborated and built on the ideas of others. A checklist was developed for critical equipment startup to be staggered by 15 minutes so that maintenance could be ready to go in a more efficient manner as each segment was brought on line. The idea resulted in \$36,000 for just one plant, and it came from the people who worked there.

“Our goal is to attain a sustainable culture of Innovation. A key way to achieve this is by tapping into the ideas of all our employees. In order to be truly successful, we need a culture of, ‘This isn’t management down; this is involvement and collaboration from all stakeholders which includes every employee,’” said Ginger Lowe-Smith, Director of Corporate Development at Windsor Foods.

Continuing benefits

Windsor Foods continues to engage its employees and customers to drive new opportunities. Using Innovation ambassadors and Wild Idea Clubs at each location, Lowe-Smith and her team create opportunities for involvement that translate that into real business value.

“Imaginatik’s Innovation Central software and best-practices support have been instrumental to our success toward introducing our entire organization to processes and tools for a long-term sustainable innovation culture,” said Lynn Hall, SVP Revenue Team, Windsor Foods.

WILD IDEA CLUBS

Volunteers at several of Windsor’s plants take it upon themselves to further develop “leftover” ideas after they run a Challenge. These Wild Idea Clubs support the review team after it has identified some ideas that warrant more discussion.